



May 15, 2013

Dear Representative,

The East Coast Shellfish Growers Association (ECSGA), the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association (PCSGA) and the Gulf Oyster Industry Council (GOIC) are asking for your support of **HR 1590; The Shellfish Marketing Assistance Fairness Act**. This bill, introduced by Representative Joe Courtney and co-sponsored by Reps. Rosa DeLauro, John Larson, Chellie Pingree and Kurt Schrader would re-establish farmed shellfish as “specialty crops” under the Farm Bill, making these producers eligible for existing research and marketing grants.

United States shellfish producers continue to deliver sustainable and nutritious shellfish for our nation’s consumers while providing thousands of green jobs in rural coastal communities. Production has been growing steadily, yet many challenges remain to ensure that this growth continues. Our community is challenged by issues such as climate change, ocean acidification, water quality degradation, the lingering effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, a challenging regulatory environment, permitting inefficiencies and use conflicts.

Our industry is not well served by existing research and marketing assistance programs under the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Commerce and recent cuts to research programs have greatly limited our access to much-needed resources. H.R. 1590 would help us access funds set aside through the Farm Bill that help small commodity groups research and market their products.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

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